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UNIVERSITY of



DAYTON

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NEWS RELEASE

UNIVERSITY OF DAYTON WINS PRESTIGIOUS GRANT FROM PEW FOUNDATION, ONE OF 10 IN COUNTRY

DAYTON, Ohio — On college campuses, introductory psychology courses often involve large lecture classes that give students little opportunity for interaction. Supported by funding from a highly competitive grant program, faculty members at the University of Dayton are using the school's distinctive fiber-optic network to change the way they teach such large-enrollment classes.

The University of Dayton is taking Introductory Psychology online, supported by a \$200,000 grant from the Pew Grant Program in Course Redesign. Of the 150 institutions that initially applied, only 10 received funding after a highly competitive elimination process. More than half of UD's students at some point in their academic careers take the Introductory Psychology course. Course content is modular, divided into sections related to the subdivisions of the discipline. Grading uses the results of multiple-choice tests, and classes are taught in traditional lecture style in sections averaging 71 students.

In courses with such large sections, opportunities are scarce for interaction, for writing and for other active learning exercises. Faculty members Kenneth Graetz, Donald Polzella and Greg Elvers believe that the way in which they are putting the course online will increase those opportunities.

In the redesigned course, students will meet with the instructor in a large classroom setting only a few times per semester. Having downloaded the content for the course, they will engage in online discussions with other students and the instructor. The variety of computer tools students will use will provide, according to Graetz, "an opportunity to create an online learning environment that is actually richer than the traditional course, that solves some of the major problems encountered in the traditional course and that allows students to learn faster and more actively than before."

Developed using Lotus LearningSpace 4.0, billed by IBM as a key technology component of its new Mindspace Solutions division, the redesigned course will include collaborative

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problem-solving and writing exercises. Students, after reading scientific articles, will interact in collaborative workspaces on the World Wide Web, exercising their writing skills as well as engaging in active learning. Also enhancing their learning will be other components of the project including modular content that will parallel the textbook, a streaming-media server with digitized videos, and applets allowing students to take IQ and personality tests as well as to examine the behavior of a virtual rat.

The course redesign, Graetz says, "will break new ground in the area of distributed collaborative learning by leveraging the state-of-the-art networking infrastructure currently in place at the University of Dayton."

All entering first-year UD students now have computers. Most UD students live on campus, and the University has connected not only academic buildings but its residence halls and the 390 University-owned houses with a high-speed data network. So, a fiber optic network connects 95 percent of first-year students and 87 percent of all UD undergraduates.

The University of Dayton team brings substantial expertise to the course redesign project. Elvers has already implemented an online course on the psychology of perception. He and Polzella studied the distributed delivery of that course and presented their findings at the annual conference on Undergraduate Teaching of Psychology. Graetz is director of the University of Dayton Collaboratory, the research and service center housed in UD's Ryan C. Harris Learning Teaching Center and dedicated to the effective application of collaboration technology to the learning process.

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